

THE LAST RESORT

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The standard on Personal Protective Equipment, (PPE) requires each employer to assess the workplace to determine whether foot, head, eye and face, fall or hand injury hazards exist in their work place. Based on the determinations made during the assessment, appropriate protective devices for particular hazards are to be selected. Regulations require the employer to be responsible for providing PPE wherever it is necessary to eliminate or minimize employee exposure to the hazard, and to train employees in the proper use of assigned PPE. Proof of compliance with the hazard assessment is verified through written documentation.

Keep one thing in mind while performing your Hazard Assessment. It is often overlooked that PPE is a last resort. You should first exhaust any engineering or procedural changes that would eliminate the exposure. Examples would be erecting a physical barrier between the hazard and employees, or replacing a toxic substance with one more user friendly. If these efforts fail, or are not practical, then PPE comes into the picture. Not all hazards can be eliminated . . . but far more are candidates then you might imagine.

Create a Hazard Assessment form consisting of various exposures. The form can be divided into different sections, each covering an exposure. One section for instance would be Head Protection. Jobs with potential hazards to the head would be anytime that your roofers are working below other workers using tools or materials that could fall. Jobs working around power lines. The section should be broken down to include various head exposures with “yes” “no” check boxes to indicate that during the assessment it was determined that that

particular hazard exist. Consideration should be given to the basic hazard categories, such as: impact, penetration, compression, chemical, heat, and particulate, and light (optical) radiation. Your form should have room to describe the hazard, and a space for recommended physical or procedural changes, or ultimately the selected PPE.

Use your form during your walk-through survey of the areas on your job sites that are in question to help you evaluate the tasks performed during various types of roofing operations. Once completed, file these and retain them until your job procedures or material uses change, rendering them obsolete. In it's most basic form, a Hazard Assessment form asks the questions: What can go wrong here? What can we do to eliminate, or minimize that exposure? What PPE could we use to minimize employee exposure when all other efforts fail?